

The first mention of a fire in Brookline is recorded in Samuel Sewall's journal in 1688. He records that a "wigwam" on the Muddy River caught fire and three "Indian" children died. Early firefighting in Brookline was performed by volunteer fire companies using hand buckets and water from wells. In 1729, an engine company was formed in the Punch Bowl Village (Washington, Brookline and Pearl Streets). Another official company was established in 1784. By 1795, Town Meeting had voted to pay for one-half the expense of the company and the purchase of a new hand tub fire engine, named the "Vigilant". The men were known as the "Vigilant Company." Both fire companies comprised of men from both Brookline and Boston.

The first engine house (fire house) was constructed about this time. It was a 10 by 15 foot building located first on Walnut Street near Village Lane and later to a lot between Boylston and Walnut Streets. A system of fire wardens was established in 1791; it was the duties of these officers to attend each fire. A new engine, the "Norfolk", was bought in 1828 and the old one sold for \$30. It was built by Thayer and was paid for by subscriptions from both Towns. Brookline contributed \$400 and Boston paid \$150. With extra money, a new engine house was built over the brook where Washington Street crossed it (near the current MBTA bridge).

The early fire companies were like social or private clubs; the firehouse served as a social center for functions such as chowder parties, parades, and musters. In 1834, the company asked the Selectmen to provide a chowder kettle. When the Selectmen refused, the company disbanded and another company was organized. In 1839, the "Brookline 1", a new engine built by Hunneman, was bought for \$900 and the "Norfolk" sold. This company had trouble electing officers so they disbanded, leaving the Town without an organized company for a time. Someone set fire to the firehouse and the engine "Brookline" in 1843. A new station was completed within six months, probably on or near the site of the present fire station at High and Washington Streets.

A progression of companies were formed, including one calling itself the "Bone and Muscle of Brookline" in 1844. The "Good Intent Hose Company" appeared in 1865. The first ladder truck was purchased in 1852. In 1873, the George H. Stone Hook and Ladder Company became the first regular organized ladder company. Stone was a popular member of the fire force who had fought in the Civil War. A new ladder and hook truck was bought around this time for \$1,200. The first steam engine was obtained in 1873; the next year the first chemical fire engine was bought. The first piece of motorized equipment was a Knox 1909 chemical and hose wagon, which had been built in Springfield, Massachusetts. The Department became completely motorized by the 1920's.

The election of fire wardens was discontinued in 1871. These positions were replaced by a Board of Engineers appointed by the Selectmen. In 1899, legislation was passed to reorganize the department under a Fire Commissioner. The first one appointed was B.W. Neal, Jr.

FIRE STATION HISTORIES

FIRE STATION #1 (Washington and High Street)

The new hose carriage house was built in 1870 and dedicated in February 1871. The site for it, purchased from Oliver White for \$1,765, was located at the junction of Washington and Boylston Streets, adjacent to Mr. White's block (part of the site of the present Fire Station). Initially, the lot was considered large enough (45 by 46 feet) to store a fire steam engine and to house a police station, among other functions. The preliminary plan called for a building costing \$8,000 with the interior to be finished as the occasion demanded.

To construct the new station, two older wooden fire buildings at the site were removed. The old engine house was removed to the Milldam and the old hook & ladder house was moved to Boylston Street and altered. The new building was designed by Louis Weissbein in the Mansard style. It was a two-story brick structure, 45 by 46 feet, with a 60 foot high hose tower, which was furnished with an 800 pound bell. The first floor contained the engine room and stable as well as four cells for the police lockup. The Company Hall and two additional police rooms were located on the second floor. A large hall and four lodging rooms were on the third floor. The final cost of the new station was \$13,000.

Beginning in 1878 and continuing for several years, rooms on the second floor were used as schoolrooms for 80 children. It was not a satisfactory location since the rooms were above the stable and the fumes wafted up to the school above. The Good Intent Hose Company moved into the new building and a company was formed to take care of the hook & ladder carriage. In 1874, Steamer #1, built by the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company, was bought and introduced into service. By 1880, this station housed Hose Company #1 and Steam Fire Engine #2. This old firehouse was considered outdated and was torn down in September 1907, to make way for the modern edifice.

The present station was designed and built in 1907-08. The architects who won the architectural competition were Freeman, Funk & Wilcox. It is a brick and limestone Renaissance Revival building with a large hose tower. A public bathhouse, designed by Alexis French, the Town engineer, was constructed adjoining it in 1909. In 1972, this station was remodeled.

FIRE STATION #2 (Washington & Thayer Streets)

In 1844, Seth T. Thayer sold the Town 874 square feet of land on Washington Street to be

used only for an engine house. Soon after the purchase, an engine house was built. A new hook & ladder house was constructed in 1855. It stood on land, next to Thayer's land, bought from Charles B. Dana and was designed by John F. Edwards. The old firehouses became inadequate by the 1870's. The two old buildings were sold to Royal Woodward for \$400 and a new brick structure was planned to replace them.

The architect, Charles K. Kirby, designed the new edifice in 1873 to be two buildings built to resemble one. A brick Mansard building (still in use located across from the Town Hall) with granite trimmings, initially, it had iron cresting on the roof. The 50 foot high hose tower (which has been taken down) belonged to the engine house and contained 1,231 pounds of Hoopers Best Bells. The stories were uniform and the 10 foot high basement was above ground, except in the front. The hook and ladder company had 21 feet x 64 feet of space and the engine house was contained in a space of 64 feet by 22 feet. Each building had a first floor room for a carriage with a convenient room for three horses. The basement contained the washing hose, the pumping and heating equipment, the cisterns and the manure pits. Each building had a large parlor in front on the second floor-- the engine house had two bedrooms, a kitchen and a hayloft; the hook and ladder company had a room, bedroom, and a hayloft. The attic was arranged and furnished for supper and also had a refreshment room with a kitchen. The George H. Stone Hook and Ladder Company was stationed here.

In 1876, the new hook & ladder truck #1, made by Joseph T. Ryan of Boston Highlands (based on the same pattern as the one used by Steamer #4, Bulfinch Station, next to the Paul Revere house) arrived. Sometime before 1890, the two entrance doors in the front were replaced with a wide door for a fire engine. The old swing doors were taken down in 1953, the openings reframed and new Roway overhead type doors were installed. In 1926, the one story Colonial Revival fire alarm building was constructed from the plans of the architects, Little & Russell. It replaced the wooden Greek Revival residence of the Kingman family.

WASHINGTON SQUARE STATION

This brick and limestone stepped gabled station was designed by G. Fred Crosby in 1898. When it was finished, the aerial ladder from the village and the engine #2 from the Devotion Street station were moved here. The huge wooden doors were replaced in 1947. An addition was made on the first floor in 1951. This station stills retains its original hose tower.

DEVOTION ENGINE HOUSE

The Fire Station at what is now the Devotion Playground was built in 1892. Alexis French, the Town Engineer, was the engineer and perhaps the architect. It was dedicated in 1893. In 1898, a new Holloway combination wagon and chemical engine was bought. The old one went to the new firehouse at Oak and Heath Streets. Money was appropriated in 1964 to improve the Devotion Playground; this included the demolition of the fire station. It was abandoned in 1965 when the new Babcock Station, named after Charles F. Rowley, was dedicated on September 1, 1965. The new station was designed by Clifford Douglas Stewart in 1964. It is a one story brick building with the firemen's quarters placed behind the trucks. This station combines the two companies formerly housed at the Devotion Street Station and the Monmouth Street Station.

STATION D

Town Meeting voted to buy a lot from Thomas O'Donnell at Boylston Street and Pound Lane and voted to erect a building. In 1890, Andrews, Jacques & Rantoul designed the new fire station. It was a double brick building with sleeping rooms and a four-horse stable. The hose wagon #3 from Atkinson's stable (which he had allowed the Town to use at no charge) on Heath Street was moved here. The new station was occupied beginning in January 1891. In 1900, this structure was remodeled inside and changed to face Reservoir Lane. During the period of remodeling, a temporary firehouse was put up.

From the Reed lot purchased in 1903 for the Heath School, land was allotted to build a new fire station. The Fire Chief stated in the Town Report that the new station would require 14 new privates and two new lieutenants. The new station replaced the wooden firehouse diagonally across the street on Pound Lane. The Georgian Revival building (still standing) was designed by Strickland, Blodgett & Law. It was designed to be consciously colonial with colonial water-struck brick, limestone cornice and door frames. Buckingham slate is on the roof. The outside lanterns were based on old models.

CHEMICAL FIRE HOUSE, Monmouth Street

In 1879, a volunteer fire company of 15 men was organized in the Longwood area because the residents in the area felt that this section had such a large amount of unprotected property. This company was housed in the Longwood Club stable by permission of Dr. William Lawrence and became Hose Company #3. After one year's service, the Board of Engineers recommended that \$400 be allocated to pay the men and make them a permanent addition to the department. The next year saw this volunteer band becoming permanent as Hose Company

#3 was housed in a shed alongside the Longwood Club stable on Carlton Street. Soon it was decided to make this company a chemical engine company, and in 1882 a chemical engine was bought and placed into the old wooden shed. There was much concern about the safety of the older building. Two options included building another building or renting the brick club stable building and fitting it up for fire use.